

the justifier of him that believes in Jesus." Blessed, indeed, is the man who has tasted the serene joy of that inner sanctuary, where the heart, broken by divine grace, yet sweetly healed even in the breaking, lies in the flame of God's forgiving and communing love, ever melting away, yet ever renewed, whilst its holy aspirations rise like the clouds of incense toward the heaven of eternal love.

SPIRITUAL HUSBANDRY.

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For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.—Jer. iv: 3.

ANCIENT PALESTINE was largely a farming country. Most of the inhabitants tilled the soil; and when the prophet came to them with this message they knew just what he meant. "Fallow ground" is not barren soil, but land that has once been under cultivation, then left to nature until a thick turf has gathered over it. It may be fertile, but in its fallow state it is waste and useless. It was not the soil of the ground that needed to be broken up, but the soil, the soul, of the nation.

From the middle of Solomon's reign, and onward, there had been a gradual decline in the piety and morals of the people. Bad kings had reigned in Jerusalem; worldly and ambitious priests had ministered at the altar. Influence generally strikes downward from the higher to the lower classes; and so the people had more and more corrupted their ways; had become idolatrous. The spiritual life was dormant. The soil was overspread with briars, and before the word of God could find place and make root in the national heart and conscience, the "fallow ground" must be "broken up."

The first thing in all moral and social and spiritual reforms, is this feature of husbandry—breaking up the fallow ground. Nations, society, churches, get into the "fallow-ground" condition,

and nothing can be done to improve or advance them until the plowshare is used. England was in this condition during the reign of the Stuarts, and it took the plow of 1640, which Cromwell held, and then the drag with iron teeth which William of Orange drove over the land in 1688, to prepare the soil of English life for the better things that have since grown and ripened there.

What called itself "the Christian Church" was choked by weeds and briars when God raised up Martin Luther and his collaborators to clear the field and "break up the fallow ground;" and lo! the Protestant faith, the Protestant churches, with all the new civilization which they have brought in, are yielding their fruits to-day in Europe and America. Communities get into this "fallow-ground" state; men of wealth become unenterprising, settle down to live at ease and on their incomes, and something is necessary to work off, to "break up" the apathy that creeps over the place.

But this is especially so in *Christian churches*. The Church is spiritual in its aims and forces. And it is so easy to become unspiritual, to lose the beautiful savor of Christ; and when this leaves, disappears, they fall into the "fallow-ground" condition. Churches, when they become rich; when, by the enterprise and energy and spirituality and sacrifices of former years, they have won a place in the community, are very apt to fall into this condition, and the seed which has God's life and salvation in it can make no vigorous root. Unless such churches work out from themselves, "break up the fallow ground" of contentment and self-satisfaction in their elegant appointments and easy surroundings, and get into large sympathy with missions, and give for them until their benefactions cut down into the quick of true sacrifice; unless they are going out after sinners, whom Christ was ever seeking, of whom the streets and the highways and the by-ways and the business places are full, they soon lose their Christliness and spiritual power. And instead of becoming the liv-

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